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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (7/24): "BARAK OBAMA WILL SOLVE IT"

Main Stories:

Barak Obama's meeting with Palestinian Authority President Abbas on July 23 in Ramallah dominates the front pages. Al- Quds reports that Abbas briefed Obama on the peace process and obstacles preventing its progress. Al- Quds' headline quotes Obama stating, "peace is a top U.S. interest and we will not waste time when moving towards the achievement of a two-state solution." Al- Ayyam reports under a banner headline that Obama promises Abbas to be a "constructive partner" in the peace process if he is elected U.S. President. In Al- Hayat Al- Jadida, Obama confirms to Abbas that he will work hard to continue the peace process, saying, "I will not go back to zero, if I am elected President of the U.S.A." As for Obama's visit to Sderot in southern Israel on July 23, all dailies report that Obama told the press that a nuclear Iran would constitute a major threat and the world must prevent that from happening. He also criticized terrorist attacks on Israel, according to coverage.

Palestinian Authority President Abbas celebrated Egyptian "revolution day" with the Egyptian ambassador to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah on July 23, according to front pages. Abbas commented that Palestinian, "national dialogue will be based on the Arab (Yemeni) initiative for reconciliation under Egyptian sponsorship." Abbas also called on donor countries "to rush" budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority, who the Palestinian Minister of Planning says, may not be able to pay employee salaries otherwise. Related reporting in all dailies notes that Hamas refused to allow two Fatah leaders to leave Gaza on July 23 to travel to Ramallah for Fatah meetings.

Al- Quds' front page reports on Israeli concern over the increase of

attacks [by Palestinians] in Jerusalem and Israeli plans to accelerate the destruction of perpetrators' homes. Israel has also implemented stringent procedures to monitor Palestinian workers in Jerusalem following the July 22 bulldozer attack in downtown Jerusalem, according to another Al Quds report. Coverage in all papers highlights comments by the father of the July 23 bulldozer attacker, in which he denies claims made by the Israeli media that his son committed a suicide operation.

Front pages report that Israel will halt security operations in the West Bank city of Nablus. Al Quds attributes the success to the intense pressure on foreign countries and Israel exerted by the Palestinian Authority, especially Palestinian Authority Premier Salaam Fayyad. Al- Ayyam reports that Israeli Defense Minister Barak informed Fayyad during a July 23 meeting, that Israel will stop all operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In related reporting, Al- Hayat Al- Jadida notes the Israeli arrest of the father of a Palestinian girl who took video footage of two Israeli soldiers shooting a bound and blind-folded Palestinian in the legs near Ni'lin village near Ramallah. The footage has attracted wide-spread international attention.

Israel is considering the release of long-time prisoner and Fatah leader Marwan Al- Barghouti as part of an exchange deal with Hamas, as a gesture of good will toward Palestinian Authority President Abbas, Al- Hayat Al- Jadida reports. The exchange deal would include the release of captured Israeli soldier Shalit, the paper adds.

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BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Independent Al- Ayyam runs an editorial by Abdullah Awwad entitled, "Barak Obama will solve it" (7/24): "...the democratic candidate is here promising that he will work to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from his first moment in the White House ... Bush promised that the two-state solution would be ready by the end of 2005... ..now the end of 2008 is approaching fast and there is nothing to show but an increase in settlement activities and judaization... pretty dreams are a good thing... so let us dream that Obama will solve [the conflict]. But how? This question awaits his entrance into the White House and then we will know the answer... just be sure that Obama's job, if he does win the elections, will be to work on 'African' issues and nothing more."

¶2. Independent Al- Quds prints an editorial by official Fatah spokesperson Ahmad Abdul Rahman, entitled, "Egypt is the only strategic guarantee for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state..." (7/24): "... Hamas is not aware that Israel uses [their takeover of Gaza] to destroy the Palestinian national project to free Palestinian land and establish a Palestinian state. And Israel can put enormous pressure on the Strip and on Hamas to push them in the opposite direction of national independence... in fact, it is Egypt that has adopted the attitude that best serves the establishment of a Palestinian state and the end to occupation. This policy is based on: ending [internal Palestinian] division... and implementing the Rafah crossing agreement of 2005..."

Walles